

"In the Anglo-Norman period small regard was paid to the habitations of the commonalty, which in London, the mother city of the kingdom, were, Stowe says, not more than sixteen feet high, poorly built of wood, and ill covered in with reeds and straw, with a hearth in the middle of the floor, and a smoke hole in the roof over it. Carpets were unknown, except as bedclothes or table-covers; and spreading straw and leaves on the floors formed part of the rough magnificence of the times. The practice was general. Pegge thinks it was adopted for coolness; and Nichols, with reason, adds for warmth also.* In the winter season the feet could be covered with the straw, and they required protection at all times from the cold damp floors of bare earth and stone in the hall and kitchen. The beds of the meaner sort were spread on the litter, and in great houses it served the purpose of a chair. Thomas à Becket, when chancellor to Henry II., according to Fitzstephen, was 'manful in his household, and had his hall strewn every day in the winter with fresh straw or hay, and in the summer with rushes and green leaves fresh gathered; for which the whimsical reason is given, that such knights as the benches could not contain, might not dirty their fine clothes when they sat on the floor.†

From the contiguity and construction of the houses, accidental fires had been such cruel scourges of the Londoners, that, under Richard I., a law was passed, that in future all houses in the city should be built to a certain height of stone, and covered with slate and burned tiles;‡ and after the fire that destroyed the greater part of Oxford in 1190, the burghers, following the example of the Londoners, also began to construct their houses of stone; and in those quarters where the poor people were unable to be at the expense of this improvement, a high stone wall was raised between every four or more houses.§

It has been observed, that the practice of strewing the floors was universal; and it seems to have extended into the apartments of the kings themselves. William, son of William of Aylesbury, held lands from Edward I. on condition of providing straw for strewing the king's chamber in winter, and herbs in summer. Glass windows, that in the time of William the Red were a mark of great luxury and magnificence, when placed in a church or palace, begin now to be seen in the houses of persons who affected indulgences, and knew how to enjoy them. Chaucer, who from his tastes and propensities may be considered one of the 'perfect gentlemen' of his time, says in his *Dreme*, that in his bed-room,

* with glas

Were all the windowes well yglazed;
and kept in such good order as to be

Full clere, with nat an hole ycrased;
and moreover so beautifully painted,

'That to behold it was great joy;
For holly all the story of Troy
Was in the glazing ywrought.'

It may also be noticed that the windows were moreable; for he further tells us that when he was reposing, the

'Windowes weren shut echone,
And through the glas the sunne shone'

upon his bed. The manner of hanging and fastening these windows is described by a contemporary romancer. When the Squire of Lowe Degre poured out the sorrows of his disconsolate love for the king of Bohemia's daughter, from which it is clear that the window she opened was framed and fastened like the casement in a modern cottage. Returning to the poet's bed-room for a few illustrations, it is found that as well as the windows,

'All the wals with colours fine
Were paint both text and glose;'

which shews that the wall must have been plastered with some care before it could receive a painting, rough as it might be, and, therefore, without the chinks that let the wind into the Saxon palaces. Arras or tapestry was also hung on walls, of which that ornamenting the hall in Warwick Castle in 1344 was a superb specimen. It should, however, be borne in mind, that it was most likely seen only in regal palaces, or in houses rivalling palaces in their furniture and in the presumption of the owner.

Amidst all this laudable attention to warmth in nocturnal climate, no mention whatever has been made of any means of heating the dormitory; and there does not seem to have been any except a pan of charcoal. A notion may now be had of the comfort enjoyed in the houses of persons of rank. The spacious lofty hall, left open to the roof, had its windows placed high from the floor, and filled with oiled linen or louver boards, or occasionally with painted glass. Its clumsy unframed doors were opened by latches; and when the walls were not coarsely painted in the fashion of the time, they were left rough, and covered with arras suspended by hooks at a distance of three or four inches from the wall. The floor of stone or earth had a part at one end raised a little above the general level, and laid with planks. On this platform or dais stood a massive table and ponderous benches or forms, and a high-backed seat for the master under a canopy. On the hearth, in the middle of the hall, were placed the andirons for supporting the ends of the brands, that were arranged by means of a heavy two-pronged fork, the type and predecessor of the modern poker. On the roof over the hearth was a turret or louver, filled with boards arranged so as to exclude rain and wind, and permit the escape of smoke; and this was sometimes an object of considerable architectural beauty in the external aspect of the building.

The chamber, like the hall, was lofty, and lighted with tall narrow windows filled with oiled linen or glass, with a part made to open like a casement, and screened with a curtain; it had neither a hearth nor a flue.

The country houses of inferior landholders and farmers were generally one story high. If they were built with two stories, the roof was so deep as to reach to the ceiling of the lower room. The hall and kitchen forming one apartment, and roughly plastered, was open to the timbers of the roof, and sometimes had a louver, and a window that could be closed with a shutter.

'Barre we the gates,

Cheke we and cheyne we and ecche chine stoppe
That no light loopen yn at lover ne at loupe.'

When these houses had a room to sleep in, old and young reposed in the same apartment, and several in one bed; servants made their beds on the floor in the kitchen. Cottages had neither louver nor loupe, and their inmates lay round the fire.

The chimneyed chamber was spacious and lofty, and usually formed with a large bay window, looking into the court of the castle. It adjoined the hall, and was used on ceremonious occasions as a reception-room for the guests before they were ushered into the hall of entertainment, and to which they retired on leaving it. At other times this privy, or presence-chamber served, according to the poet, as a dining-room. Another apartment, distinguished as our lady's bower or parlour, and appropriated to the exclusive use of the dames, was that in which they received their visitors, passed their time, and often took their family meals in. The windows of this also opened into the dismal quadrangle, for all were obliged to sacrifice their feelings and enjoyment to security.

The stronghold of Conway is remarkable for exhibiting another domestic refinement, not found, except at Kenilworth, in any contemporary building. A hearth is recessed into the wall, and has a flue rising from it for the passage of the smoke into the air. It is true, that after this period, flued fireplaces were sometimes made in rooms that had been erected without them, but the chimney in Conway Castle, and a similar one at Kenilworth, appear as if they had formed part of the original edifices.

Castles and mansions were now built of stone, but wood and plaster continuing to be the materials of ordinary houses, in towns destructive fires were common, and the custom

of strewing the floors with straw must have greatly increased the danger. Chaucer says—

'When a chambre a fire is, or a hall,
More nede is sodainly to rescowe,
Than to disputen, and ask among us all,
Howe the candell in the strawe is fal.'

This frequency of accident, more particularly in London, had led to the enactment of some judicious municipal regulations. The magistrates, says the *Chronicle of London*, quoted by Strutt, 'are empowered to enquire if there be any house in the ward that is tiled without other thing than tile or lead, and there be any chementi that hath a reerdos made uncomeli, otherwise than it ought to be.' And also if any baker or brewer heat their ovens or other '(furnace) with strawe or reydre or other things that might cause peril of fire.' Every ward was also to have 'a racke with two long cheynes of yrne and two ladders,' and every house was to have 'a tub of water ready for peril of fire.' The scavengers' oath of office was, that they should examine that all 'chemys, reedossys, and furnessys be made of stone for defent of fire.'* But notwithstanding these precautions, the history of London and of other towns shew a lamentable disregard to the lessons of dire experience in every thing connected with the protection of buildings from fire.

The chimney has been considered an Italian invention. But if Winwall House be an Anglo-Norman edifice, its chimneys must have been built in the twelfth century; and those in the castles at Kenilworth and Conway will also long precede, in point of antiquity, the *camini* and *fumajudi* of Padua and Venice. The fourth example of a chimney in an English building is that described by Leland, in his *Itinerary*, where he gives an account of his visit to Bolton Castle. This building, he says, 'standeth on a roke syde; and all the substance of the lodginge in it be included in 4 principall toures. It was finished or kynge Richard the 2 dyed. One thyng I muche notyd in the hawle of Bolton, how chimeneys were conveyed by tunnels made on the syds of the walls betwixt the lights in the hawle, and by this means, and by no covers is the smoke of the hearthe in the hawle wonder strangely conveyed.† It has been seen that, previous to the erection of this stronghold, the word chimney is of frequent occurrence. Chaucer in several places speaks of chambers with chimeneys; Longlande, we have seen, also employs it; and Wiclif, in his translation of the New Testament, in 1380, has the expression, 'thei schulen send him into the chymeney of fier.' In the poetical vocabulary, 'chimney' appears to be synonymous with 'fire-place,' or 'hearth recess,' and the verbal equivalent to the word in the reformer's Testament is 'furnace.' Leland, who wrote a century after, in using the word almost defines it. 'The chimeneys were conveyed by tunnels;' or, in other words, the fire-place was continued by a tunnel to the top of the building; a description that will accurately fix the meaning of the word when found in writers previous to the Tudor period; for it is quite obvious the chimneys in common use, and with which Leland was acquainted, had no tunnels to convey the smoke from the hearth—otherwise his admiration of those in Bolton Castle would have been unexplainable. His observation, that the smoke from the hearth was not conveyed by 'covers,' also shews that at the time he was writing, covers were common appendages to fire-places for conveying smoke.

It was, perhaps, from a desire to diminish the risk of accidents by fire that the custom prevailed of laying the floors with a coating of cement made of lime, and pounded rubbish, or pebbles. The floors in the upper rooms in the old part of the Abbey House, at Waltham, built by Sir Edward Denny, were overcast, or paved in this manner, with a coarse plaster of sand and pebbles, forming a crust about an inch thick, coloured deep red like a bright brick floor, and similar to the rude rough-cast or stucco floors seen in some parts of Lincoln and Yorkshire.‡ Glass was rare in the windows of gentlemen's houses before the time of Henry VIII.§ Copyholders and poor people had none. The windows belonging to Con-

* Horda. Ang. vol. ii. p. 46.

† Britton. Arch. Antiq. vol. iv. p. 136.

‡ Illustrations, &c., p. 94. In the churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary Hill, London, 1685, is an entry—'Paid the dawl for terryng of floris per day ryd, 1s' under the date 1497, is a charge for 'a lode of lime to overcast the floore in Lewisham's house.'

§ Antiquarian Repository, vol. i. p. 72.

• Illustrations of Manners and Expenses of Ancient Times, p. 12.

† Brand. Popular Antiq. vol. i. p. 241.

‡ Stow. Survey of London, p. 73, ed. Thoms. The dwellings of the Saks were either very mean or extremely inconvenient. The bishop, noble, and king lived in small stone castles, perched on some precipitous rock, with massive walls enclosing narrow stuffed apartments, that had no chimneys, and loopholes for windows. The cottages were slight erections of wood, without hearth, chimney, or window, and their towns were a collection of such hovels. The use of wood in building had been so general, that castles were built with it. Several of these combustible strongholds, belonging to the Celtic chiefs in Moray, were burned in the rebellion of Gillescop. — Chalmers's "Caledonia," vol. i. p. 203.

§ A' Wood. Hist. of Oxford, vol. i. p. 172.

† Works, fol. 229. Edit. 1602.